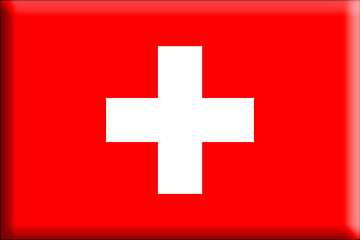
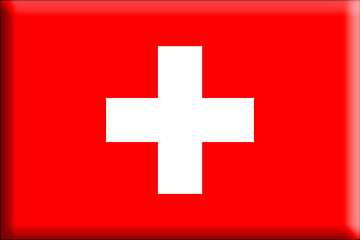
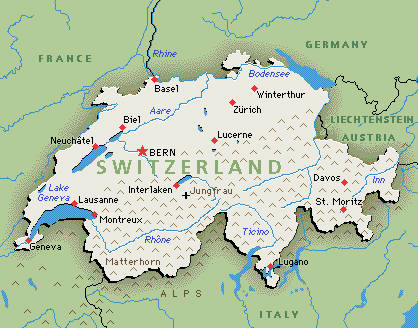
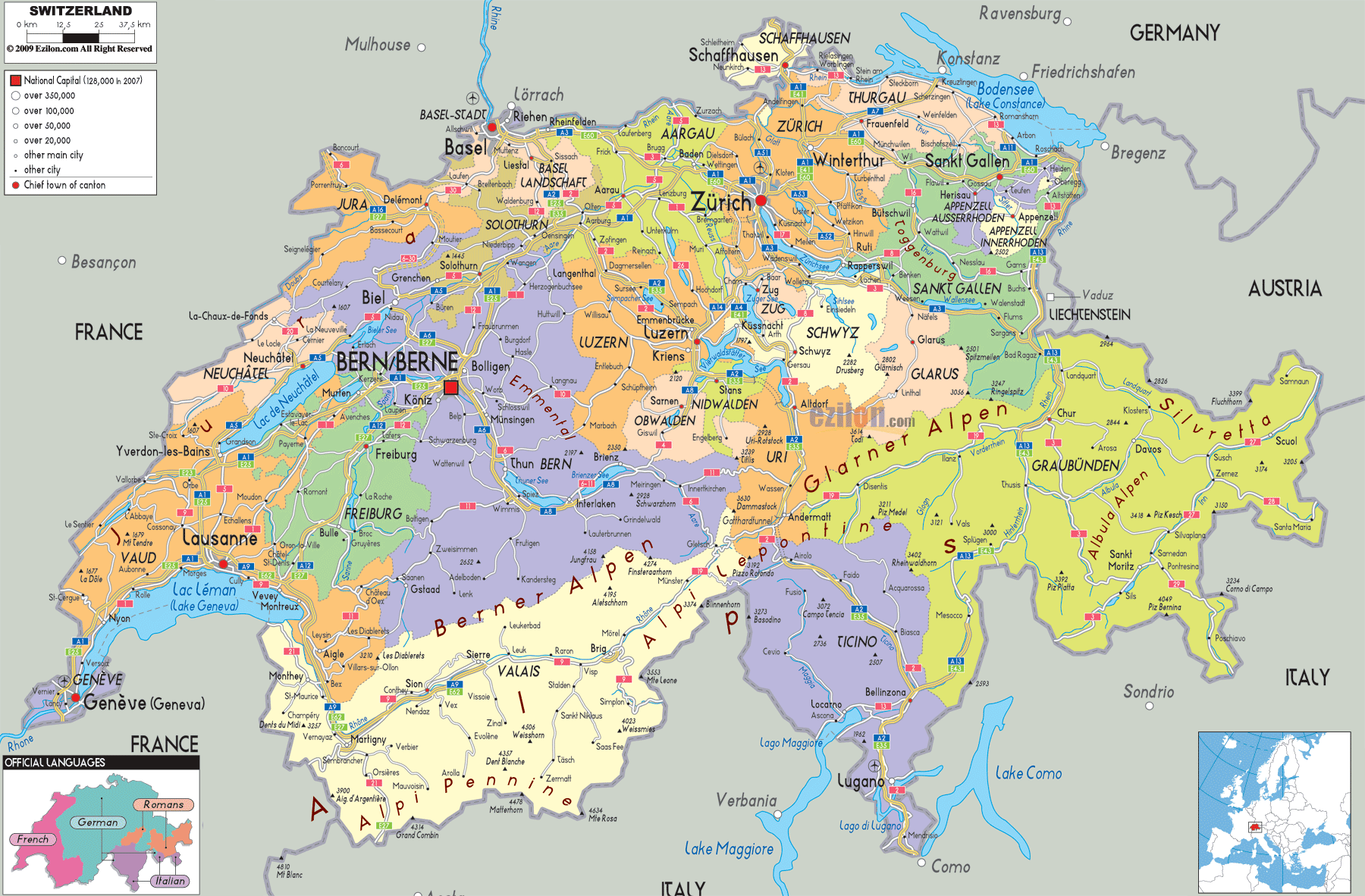
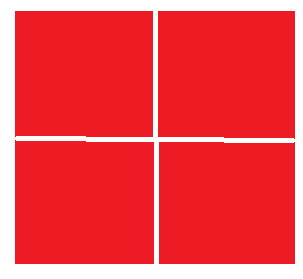
**Switzerland**

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**Switzerland is a relatively small European country with a population of about 7.9 million. It is surrounded by Germany to the north, France to the west, Italy to the south and Austria and Liechtenstein to the east. The capital of Switzerland is Bern, and the largest cities are Zurich and Geneva. Switzerland is known for being neutral and has not been in a war since1815. Switzerland’s national anthem is the Swiss Psalm. The Red Cross began in Switzerland, and the Swiss flag and coat of arms have the symbol of the Red Cross on them. The four official languages are German, French, Italian and Romansh.**



**Languages**

French

German

Swiss Coat of Arms

Romansh

Italian

Romansh

**Climate**

**The weather in Switzerland is very unpredictable. It varies between locations, and it varies from year to year. The Swiss climate is usually temperate in the more populated areas, while the Alps are covered in ice and snow. Switzerland’s mountains and valleys are responsible for the quick changes in climate. It is common to go from cold and cloudy to warm and sunny in just a few minutes. During the winter, the valleys can have no sun for weeks.**

****[](http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://photos.travelblog.org/Photos/68732/321970/f/2825145-Swiss-Alps-0.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.travelblog.org/Photos/2825145&h=394&w=600&sz=63&tbnid=F_KFjPByBahmpM:&tbnh=77&tbnw=118&prev=/search?q=pics+of+swiss+alps&tbm=isch&tbo=u&zoom=1&q=pics+of+swiss+alps&docid=uI0TjNRHB1x5GM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=KGCpTqGgH6yGsALezsi_Dw&sqi=2&ved=0CD4Q9QEwBg&dur=2075)

**Swiss Alps**

**Environment**

**[](http://www.google.com/imgres?q=forests&hl=en&sa=X&qscrl=1&nord=1&rlz=1T4ADSA_enUS363US365&biw=1463&bih=606&tbm=isch&prmd=imvnsu&tbnid=JFMO09_whTFxQM:&imgrefurl=http://thebesttraveldestinations.com/bamboo-forests/&docid=BgiM8ykJdCLW0M&imgurl=http://thebesttraveldestinations.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/bamboo-forest-01.jpg&w=550&h=413&ei=7a-qTpDXNsm1sQLG5sCPDw&zoom=1) The mountain environment is extremely fragile. A quick change in climate can cause landslides and flooding, which can threaten the tourism industry. Changes in climate can also endanger certain animals’ habitats. Glaciers are the source of many of Switzerland’s major rivers. The government is responsible for protecting rivers and other sources of water. The water that comes out of Swiss faucets is as pure as bottled mineral water and 500 times cheaper! About 31% of Switzerland is covered by woodland. Forests are important in preventing landslides, flooding and avalanches. One thing the Swiss are good at is recycling. Roughly 47% of all trash is recycled, making Switzerland the greenest country in the world.**

**Cities**

**Zurich, Geneva and Basel are the three most densely populated cities in Switzerland. Zurich is the largest and is located in central Switzerland at the Northwestern tip of Lake Zurich. Zurich is one of the world’s largest financial centers. The Zurich Airport and railroad station are the busiest in the country. Geneva is the second largest city and is French-speaking. The headquarters for the United Nations and the Red Cross are located in Geneva. Basel is the third largest city and is located where the Swiss, French and German borders meet. Basel is a German-speaking city. It has several theatres and museums, including the Museum of Fine Arts, which holds the world’s oldest collection of art.**

**[](http://www.google.com/imgres?q=cities&hl=en&sa=X&qscrl=1&nord=1&rlz=1T4ADSA_enUS363US365&biw=1463&bih=606&tbm=isch&prmd=imvnsb&tbnid=axTCySvCvSU-OM:&imgrefurl=http://www.treehugger.com/files/2011/05/falling-crime-rates-big-cities-key-sustainable-future.php&docid=KWY38V3uDmVMHM&imgurl=http://www.treehugger.com/falling-crime-cities-sustainable.jpg&w=500&h=333&ei=WbKqTsXxOeLisQKruuTbDg&zoom=1)**

